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CORDELIA AND OTHER POEMS

N. B. RIPLEY



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CORDELIA

AND OTHER POEMS

BY
N. B. RIPLEY

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TO
HIS MOTHER

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED BY
THE AUTHOR



NOTE.—Of the following poems, "The Legend of the Dipper," and the sonnet, "The Happy," have previously appeared in *The Christian Advocate*; the sonnets, "June" and "Lake George," in *Everywhere*; "The Empty Nest," "March," "Old Age," in the *Northern Christian Advocate*, and two or three others in the local press. The author takes pleasure in hereby acknowledging the courtesy which allows him to republish them here.

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CORDELIA

AND OTHER POEMS

Cordelia

A HISTORY.

Still stands the beautiful village embosomed in
hills and meadows;
Down through the valley beside it bickers the
stream toward the ocean;
'All o'er the crests of the mountains the woods
lift their branches skyward,
'And stately monarchs grand of the forest stand,
like sentinels old,
Watching with vigilant eye the fields and the
people beneath them.

Still on a clear summer evening the sun, in the
western heavens,
Spreads out glorious banners resplendent with
amber and crimson;

Cordelia

And bright in the soft twilight, as swallows wing
flight to the home-nest,
Hesperus, radiant queen of the star-world, shines
for a little,
Then sinks, with the close of the day, to the far
land of the sunset.

Just where the hills with verdure and beauty
slope back toward the westward,
Stood there in days of the Past, with speed and
precision receding,
A cottage painted in red, and housing within it
a widow
Whose husband died while he bravely fought for
the flag of his country.
She was a woman famed 'mong her neighbors
for virtue and courage,
Like her whom the wise man describes and calls
the virtuous woman.
Childhood as others know it she knew not.
Wearied oft were her hands,
And her heart, though the heart of a child, was
ne'er free from life's burdens.

Not long ago, in the afternoon of a summer
and rest-day,
Sought I the place where she played in the hours
of her burdened childhood.

Cordelia

Still stood the tow'ring hemlocks, with branches
 outspreading, majestic,
'Neath which, in the few moments she snatched
 from the stress of her labor,
Passed she her happiest times in a round of
 innocent pleasure.
Just a short distance away, on its hinges, rusty
 and creaking,
Hung the old gate which often had swung to
 the touch of her fingers.
Near it the open porch at the door of the cottage,
 where, erstwhile,
In service for others, her ready feet resounded
 in passing!

Thoughtful and sad, I stood 'mid the scenes
 so familiar around me;
Up in the ancient hemlocks and maples whispered
 the summer winds—
Sighed with the same gentle sound she heard
 in the days of her childhood;
Round me the teeming fields stretched their
 acres of glebe and of meadow;
Borne to my senses came the same odors of field
 and of forest;
Above the same sky, and the same sun flooding
 light o'er the landscape.

Cordelia

Strange to live in the midst of so much they
have wrought who have left us!
Strange to walk o'er the sod that has bent to
the press of their footsteps—
Footsteps that never, never again shall resound
o'er our portal—
And say, while half of our life lies buried, "This
spot they frequented!"

Quite early in life she was led in love to the
nuptial altar,
Then came to her heart joys of love, home, and
hopes of maternity.
Only a few years had passed happily over the
household
When over the homes of the country rolled the
ominous war-cloud.
Came the fond father home from the heat of his
labor—
He was the village smithy, and worked by the
glow of the forge-fire—
Came in most anxious mood, with looks on the
faces and forms of his dear ones.
Kissing fondly his wife, "Cordelia, my own," he
said, while his heart spake,
"Imperiled the country is, and sorely in need of
defenders.

Cordelia

I hear in this time of distress her call, and haste
to obey it;
If in the battle I fall, God will care for you and
the children."

Hot fell her tears, but a nobler heart never
throbbed in a bosom;
Loved she her dear ones well, but her suffering
country as dearly;
Out of her loyal heart spake she strongly, with
voice patriotic:
"Go at the call in this hour when are needed the
strong, the stalwart.
If in the conflict you fall, and life here must go
on without you,
The Lord who keeps watch o'er us all will care
for me and the children!"

Into the hot-breathed battle he went with the
living and dying;
Proved he a soldier good in the roar of the
strife, fierce and deadly;
Fought he as brave man and true, the cause of
his country defending;
Shirked he in service neither in camp nor the
toil of the marches;

Cordelia

Zealous was he in the fight for the health and
life of the Union,
Yet earnestly longed for the end of the war and
struggle of battle.
Out on the ensanguined field, his comrades fast
falling around him,
He went, and Death passed him by, nor missile
nor blade ever harmed him;
His not to die in the awful roar and the
slaughter of carnage,
His a death in the horror and stench of the
poisonous prison;
An end even worse than by gleaming sword or
swift-flying bullet.

Meanwhile the cottage where, gently, the hills
sloped back to the westward
Shrouded and saddened was with a gloom that
was dreadful, unlifted.
Children four there were when the war-billows
raged in the Southland—
One died ere the husband departed, and was
sleeping the last sleep—
And at the hearthstone sat the ghosts of Disease
and of Poverty.
Now sat the defenseless woman down at the
couch of her children,

Cordelia

Saw one, in pain, move out of this world toward
the shores of the other,
Then followed its cold form to the grave in the
quiet, old churchyard,
'And watched from her casement, while soft
moonbeams streamed over the landscape,
The spot where, in earth's embrace, her loved
ones were peacefully sleeping!

Mem'ry recalls a time long after the date of
this chronicle
When I came suddenly on her kneeling in sadness and silence
Before her stained war-letters, in her presence
all those mementoes
So dear to a heart that has suffered and yet
buried its sorrows.
Held in caressing hands were two tiny pink
slippers of satin,
And while down her cheeks the coursing tears
were her anguish expressing,
With lips which could scarcely speak, so deep
the emotions which stirred her,
She said to me, 'mid her sobbing, "These were
the shoes of my darling!"
I knew full well where the feet were, motionless
now, that had worn them;

Cordelia

Many a time in the quiet, long afternoon of a
Sabbath,
Pensively holding my hand, and walking as one
does in sadness,
She led me to gaze on the spot, under the shade
of the maples,
Where her darlings, with folded hands, beneath
the grasses, were sleeping;
And I linked in my thoughts that scene of the
two satin pink slippers
With the sorrows which hung like a pall over
her spirit patient,
In that day when, under the flag, her husband
fought 'gainst the rebel.

There have been heroes bold who fought on
the field fearful and bloodstained,
Holding it honor enough though they fell un-
known in the carnage;
Unsung their names, ungraved, save on the
hearts of those who have loved them;
Reckon always among them, as equally true and
heroic,
Women who bade them go forth, and sat by the
gloom of the hearthstone,
Bearing alone the burdens of life and of death-
separation.

Cordelia

Up to the lonely red cottage where sloped the
hills to the westward—
Up from the camp in the South, where soldiers
were kept for the battle—
Came the news to the mother, already near
crushed with her burdens,
That captured the husband was, and now lay in
a Southern prison!
Oh, the long hours and days of the patient and
terrible vigil!
The long hours of the nights spent in prayer to
the Heavenly Father!
Oh, the waiting, despondent, for news from the
starving sufferer!
Oh, how the bright rays flooded the sky of her
hope for a moment,
'All too soon to be clouded forever in deepness
of darkness!

Came there at last by some comrades of his
who had been in prison,
Who by fortune most good had secured the sweet
boon of freedom,
News of his death and that of a messmate and
fellow in torture
While they closely lay, well-nigh each in the
embrace of the other!

Cordelia

Heavy and sad the heart of the widow, her
eyes on the future—
A future filled not only with sadness, but burdens increasing;
Looked on her fatherless sons with compassion
yearning and tender,
Lifted her care in prayer to the arms of the
Bearer of burdens,
Then with a calm resolution addressed herself to
the future.

She was a woman famed 'mong her neighbors
for virtue and courage,
Like her whom the wise man describes and calls
the virtuous woman;
Like Cornelia, the Roman matron, in hist'ry ever
famous,
If asked for her jewels by those who look on
naught but earth's baubles,
Would have looked on her sons, with their future
all brightly before them,
'And answered, a woman leal and heroic, "These
are my jewels!"

'A queen among mothers; thus my heart and
my judgment account her.
Nothing with her, which toil could supply, was
too good for her children;

Cordelia

Labored she early and late at tasks that were
heavy and menial,
That kept might the children be all under the
sheltering home roof—
That home might be home, a place of safety and
rest to her loved ones!

Out of penury she, denying herself all but
essentials,
Managed to bring into the home those things
desired by the boy life,
Proud was she of her boys, and remarked in
days following after—
Though she could not have said it because of
her own experience—
“I would prefer three boys to a family of one,
a maiden.”

Most sunny and warm the home was, though
it was one of the humblest ;
She who had suffered so much, and had told her
grief to the Saviour,
Drove back the falling tears as her thought traced
the days of her sorrow,
Out of the conflict rose with the calm of a queen
and a victor,
And lived with a smile on her face, all for the
sake of her children!

Cordelia

Again let me think of that cottage where hills
sloped to the westward ;
Home's not the gilded hall, nor the palace with
splendid appointments,
Home is the place where love waits to welcome
and care for its tenants.
Home in that humble cottage ! My eyes see it
still in my dreaming !
One little room was our kitchen, sitting-room,
dining-room, parlor,
And o'er it another will live in my memory for-
ever !
In it an old-fashioned bed, with coverlets warm
and in plenty,
And sleeping upon it betimes in the wild nights
of the winter,
Looking up through the roof to the stars that
shone clear in the heavens,
In morning brushing away the snow which had
blown through the shingles,
Were two boys who lived and loved in the joy
of their happy boyhood !

Glad were the summers with riotous sports in
the field and woodland !
Happy the gladsome hours that were spent with
the youths and the maidens ;

Cordelia

Happy the hours we beguiled in the rigorous
winter season,
Skating the frozen pond, or in coasting with
crowds down the hillside!
Comes the scene to me now as I sit in the midst
of my dreaming.
Follow I now in my thought a light which gleams
out in the darkness,
I come to the cottage door, and pause ere the
latch is uplifted,
Listening am I, with heart and soul, to a voice
that is singing—
'Tis the voice of my grandmother—this of her
singing the burden,
“Nearing am I the heavenly ranks of the holy
and kindred;
Brush I the dews on the banks of the Jordan;
near is the crossing!”
Open the door I push, and at table is seated my
mother,
Busied with labor still, though the lamps of the
evening are lighted;
Lifts she at once her head, and with a saddened
smile bids me welcome!
I awake from my dream, so sad that only a
dream it should be!

Cordelia

Silent beneath the sod to-day are the dead lips
of the singer!

Silent beneath the sod are the fingers that once
were so busy!

Pious Cordelia was, and very careful that all
of her children
Reared should be in the practice and faith of
the Christian religion;
Always faithful was she in attendance at hours
when the worship
Was observed in the little old church of which
she was a member.
Thither she led her sons, teaching them by ex-
ample and precept
How they, 'mid the world's trials and follies,
should follow the Saviour.
Neither neglected she to look after the mind's
careful training—
She was a lover of books, and of learning well
knew the value;
Kept she by toil of her hands her sons in the
school of the village.
Prize I that training highly, the training of school
and of chapel,
Training that looked to the health of the mind
and fruits of religion.

Cordelia

Thus, as the years, one by one, with speed that
was swift and unerring,
Glided into the past, and of them remained but
a memory,
Ripened the children from boys to the years and
stature of manhood;
The widow, with memories of yore which were
sweetest and saddest,
Had over the pathway of time arrived at the
years of the matron.
Lives in my mind and my heart this woman, well-
famed for her virtue;
Not of the shapeliest form, nor of dress in the
mode or fashion;
Showed she her toil, her plainness the result of
her poverty.
Yet was she splendid, having the carriage and
grace of a lady,
A personality expressive of much that was
beautiful—
Eyes that were brown, with a look in them of
tenderness infinite;
Lips that were firm, and round them depres-
sion of lingering sadness;
Plentiful hair that was brown, and combed
smoothly over her forehead,

Cordelia

After a fashion, though old, which suited her
face to perfection.
Such, as I look through the Past, was Cordelia,
queen among mothers!

But, with the burdens and sorrows stern life
had laid on her shoulders,
Came there at last a most painful breaking of
heart and of courage;
And down sat Cordelia to gaze trustingly out o'er
the pathway
So many had trodden before her—to the great
faith of her soul
The way, sharply defined, as she saw it, to glory
immortal!
Sorrows and difficult burdens she raised for the
sake of others,
With the tension strong which had been long on
her heart-strings,
Brought her the final summons which called her
across the dark river.
Yet complaint was there none, only a waiting
trustful and patient;
Paused she and rested awhile ere she bowed to
this summons final,
Thinking with joy and pride on the works which
her hands had accomplished,

Cordelia

Till in the glow of the sunset stood she at edge
of the crossing,
Sank in a pang of her suff'ring into unconscious-
ness blissful,
Quitted this earth with its shadows to be with
Jesus and loved ones!

Never shall be forgotten the day I last looked
on her features.
Urging my way o'er the hills from a town a few
miles in distance
Came I at last to the old home from which
life's duties had thrust me.
Stopped was the throb of her heart a few hours
before my arrival;
Silent she lay, with the stillness and myst'ry of
death around her;
Sleeping she seemed to be, on the face an ex-
pression most life-like,
As though she had lain down to rest, to waken
refreshed from slumber,
With the light of a smile; and I could not resist
the impression
That, in passing from pain in this world to the
bliss of the other,
The welcome glad from friends thrilled her soul
with a joy so ecstatic,

Cordelia

The radiant smile on the sleeping features, so
peaceful and happy,
Was the reflected brightness that burst on her
glorified spirit!

Stood we and wept out our sorrow, the three
bereft of her presence,
Yet we thought, 'mid our tears, of the gladness
she found in reunions;
Up in the Father's house, in the country eternal
and glorious,
Doubtless her soul found again the loves it had
lost and had yearned for;
Joined the chorus angelic, for which she had
made preparation;
Found there the land of the young, where wast-
ing disease never enters;
Bathed her freed spirit in light from the throne
of God and the Saviour;
Shouted o'er victories won in the path of life,
rough and thorny;
Thankful for all the burdens so heavy and well-
nigh o'erwhelming,
That by them at least she reached the home that
is changeless, immortal.
Resting there she abides, and the heavenly fruits
make her youthful;

Cordelia

Resting there she abides in the dwellings that
front on the river!

There I shall see her, though I know not now the
time of the meeting;

But when my sun is setting, my feet touch the
brink of the crossing,

Gladly, I know, will her voice sound with some-
thing like the old home-call;

And I shall see her with Jesus, her face will
speak out its welcome.

With hand clasped in hand, triumphant we'll pass
through the shining portal,

At home evermore in the blest place of the
Saviour's preparing!

Sadly followed we her remains out to the quiet
old churchyard,

Where the two little ones sleep, and where is the
shade of the maples,

Buried her form from sight and left her alone
with the centuries,

While o'er her bosom shall grow the grasses or
whistle the storm-wind.

Still stands the beautiful village embosomed in
hills and meadows;

Down through the valley beside it bickers the
stream toward the ocean;

Cordelia

'All o'er the crests of the mountains the woods
 lift their branches skyward,
And stately monarchs grand of the forest stand,
 like sentinels old,
Watching with vigilant eye the fields and the
 people beneath them.

Still on a clear summer evening the sun, in the
 western heavens,
Spreads out glorious banners resplendent with
 amber and crimson ;
'And bright in the soft twilight, as swallows wing
 flight to the home-nest,
Hesperus, radiant queen of the star-world, shines
 for a little,
Then sinks, with the close of the day, to the far
 land of the sunset.

The Consecration

A LEGEND OF OUR COLONIAL PERIOD

Where the Wissahickon rolls its torrents onward
to the sea,
Dwelt there once among some mystics one who
hailed from Germany;
Scorning wealth and noble title, he had crossed
the water-way,
That he might instruct his children, and have
time to think and pray.

'Twas an era of oppression in this New World
o'er the wave;
Cries from those in cruel bondage rose to God
that He would save,
Till a voice had come which told them that, as
e'en God's Son had died
To redeem a sad world fallen, they should never
be denied.

Far around the snow was trackless, and the grim
old forest trees
Swayed and groaned, while icy crystals swarmed
in air like summer bees,

Cordelia

When one night, the old man waited with his
 children at his knee,
Full of faith for the fulfillment of a spoken
 prophecy ;

For prediction had been uttered how upon this
 very night,
At the third hour of the morning, God unto the
 watching sight
Would reveal a strong Deliv'rer ; so they silent
 vigil kept,
Till across the storm-strewn threshold a stately
 stranger stepped.

Tall was he, with form majestic, and upon his
 manly face
Noble calm, while all his bearing spoke of dignity
 and grace.
“Friends,” he said, in salutation, “give me in-
 formation, pray ;
Having lost it, you will tell me whither I can
 find my way?”

Then the waiting, watching mystic did a kind of
 rapture feel—
“ ’Tis not so ; you have but found it. At this
 holy altar kneel

The Consecration

For the oil of consecration; unto you is mission
given

Great as ever was man's portion from the gracious
hand of Heaven.

"Deem this not the idle fancy of an overtaxèd
brain;

Listen: for your country's future anxious, court-
ing sleep in vain,

Forth you rode into the night-time, conscience
ever questioning,

Is it lawful for the subject to draw sword against
his king?

"And the beast by you unguided, wandered on,
you cared not where,

Till he brought you here in safety to the shelter
of my care.

Ask me not how know I these things. Has not
God His will made known,

How to this down-trodden people shall deliver-
ance be shown?"

Deeply moved by such behavior, the traveler
bowed his head

To receive the holy ointment. "Promise me,"
the good man said,

Cordelia

“That when strikes the hour of justice—o’er the
land war’s clouds portend,
Then your sword shall leap its scabbard, and
your country’s cause defend.

“Promise when you see your soldiers suffering
for fire and bread;
Or if once a grateful people, by your arm to
vict’ry led,
Should bow down to you in homage, pledge me
to remember still,
To bring forth a nation’s freedom, you but work
the great God’s will.

“In His name who hears the needy when they
cry unto His throne,
I now give you consecration; fear not, look to
Him alone,
And as you are leal and honest, never doubt but
God will be
Your protector in the conflict, and will give you
victory.

“Let no crown be on your forehead; but the
wreath your brow shall wear
Be the blessings and the honors a free people
garland there.

The Consecration

Take my hand, and hear me swear it by the God
 who lends me breath,
That to you, and to this country I will faithful
 be till death!"

Then his daughter placed a chaplet of the laurel
 she had wrought,
Like those worn by Grecian victors, by their
 deeds of prowess bought;
While the son, who stood in waiting, now with
 sword in hand drew nigh,
'And, as fell the benediction, girt it on the stran-
 ger's thigh.

Stepped he thence unto the altar where the Word
 was open laid—
On its page a hand he rested, to his lips he
 pressed the blade;
Then a vow those firm lips parted, as he raised
 his noble head,
While his eye with lustre lighted: "I will keep
 the faith," he said!

Morning dawned, and from his shelter went the
 wand'rer forth again,
Giving naught of name or station; but there
 came a time when men

Cordelia

Saw Columbia's acres lighted by the flames of
tyranny,
And they sought for one who bravely should
forever set them free.

Then appeared for their redemption one whose
consecration vow
Made him victor in the conflict; and his fellows
count him now
First 'mid warfare's gallant captains, first the
country's heart who won—
We enshrine his name forever, the immortal
Washington!

A Summer Reverie

To-day I walk beside the stream
Where youthful fancies had their dream,
A glorious summer beauty fills
The spreading fields and rising hills.

I muse in reminiscent mood;
In years ago two boys once stood
Where swayed the alder's bending bough
Precisely as I see it now.

The older one the younger led,
With many a whispered caution said,
"I will reveal—you'll not give out—
Where lurk the biggest, lustiest trout;

"I 'spied them but the other day,
When I was fishing up this way,
And we shall bag, lest I mistake,
Of this fine school, a handsome take.

"Now, you step softly—don't come near—
To trust you here at all I fear—
O'er stream upon this log I'll lie,
And try my hand for largest fry."

Cordelia

I see him now, with warning look,
Put down his nicely fitted hook,
The while I wait, 'mid stillness round,
For him to bring the trout to ground.

I hear it now, as in a dream—
Beneath the log the boiling stream—
And the defeated angler's shout,
"Confound it all! I've lost the trout!"

"It's all because you came too near!
Now, what I say I bid you hear:
When next a-fishing I shall go,
The time and place *you* shall not know!"

O, shades of happy fishermen,
Who lingered there before and then,
O, tell us why, as Burns hath taught,
The best-laid plans oft come to naught?

Our schemes on many an ill-fraught day
Bring nothing but most dire dismay;
We look for Fortune's fav'ring smile,
But Disappointment waits the while!

A Summer Reverie

Why is it, when in life we fail,
We send forth nothing but a wail?
And, Adam-like, look round for one
To lay the blame of failure on?

Better to rise, assert the will,
Seeking the use of higher skill,
And every work with care begun,
Toil bravely on till fame is won.

Thus muse I, while the brook still flows;
The urgent Present rudely throws
Its veil to hide the Past, which teems
With mem'ries, and so end my dreams.

This is the blessing I would ask:
The strength to do my daily task;
Such beauty all my life may fill
As floods to-day o'er field and hill.

The Agricultural Fair

'Tis in the ripening autumn days,
Resplendent, crisp September—
The time the crowds remember—
When far and near through the country-side
Is heard the clatter of those who ride
In the early morning weather—
In the cool and bracing weather.
They rattle along o'er the dusty way,
Dressed each in his holiday array,
The noise of wheels and their laughter gay,
Gladdens the fresh'ning air.
'Tis now they go to the annual show—
The agricultural fair.

A curious crowd is this to me,
Who are met together here—
Some have not met for a year:
Here is John, with his very best girl—
The finest chance to give her a whirl
Up behind his bay that can pace—
How he beats them all at the pace!
And his Betsey makes him glad to-day,
Saying the word he wants her to say,

The Agricultural Fair

Giving her heart to him for alway,
They are a happy pair!
'Tis thus things go at the annual show—
The agricultural fair!

And the farmer's stalwart form we see
Amid the throng and babble.
He enjoys the noisy rabble;
His quiet life in the stretching fields
No great amount of excitement yields;
This crowd is a breath from the world—
The rushing and hurrying world.
And with him sleek kine, or well-trained steer,
"The best you will see," says he, "this year;
Always manage to bring something here;
The judges treat me square,
That's why I go to this annual show—
This agricultural fair."

But come with me to the floral hall,
The place where the women gather,
Their realm and glory, rather.
"An apron like that red calico,
I had when I went to school, I know,"
Says one of a patch-work quilt—
Of the old "log-cabin" quilt.
"Mrs. Samuel Thompson, I'd think,

Cordelia

Wouldn't bring that old quilt made of pink—
You could tell it anywhere in a wink;
It always hangs right there!"
They're often so at the annual show—
The agricultural fair.

Round this corner the seller of whips
Is shouting like creation!
He whips to beat the nation;
While yonder, in full "exhibition,"
Himself in the best of "condition,"
Stands forth the medicine vender—
With buncombe the nostrum vender,
Most wonderful cures beyond all doubt,
From corn on the toe to troublesome gout,
For slightest pay shall be brought about;
He takes the shekels there.
How little we know at this annual show—
The agricultural fair.

But horses, of animals the king,
Honored in song and story,
Are here in all their glory.
How they arch their necks and sniff the air,
From coldest of blood to proudest pair,
All doing their best to excel—
The drivers each hope to excel.

The Agricultural Fair

Nobly one steps in his trappings gay,
As though to the gazing crowd he'd say,
"I'd have you know that this is *my* day;"
He takes the premium there.
You'll see it so at the annual show—
The agricultural fair.

The racers are here, with flying speed,
They flame with the conq'ror's fire,
They pant with a high desire
Now, while the onlooking people wait,
With giant endurance, swinging gait,
To make all the race-course thunder—
An exciting kind of thunder.
Wild are men when the races begin,
Wilder yet if a favorite win,
While those who lose much valuable "tin"
A dubious face must wear.
'Tis often so at the annual show—
The agricultural fair.

The day is done and homeward they go
In cool and crisp September—
The time they'll e'er remember;
And far and near through the country-side,
Is heard the chatter of those who ride
Toward home in the evening weather—
In the cool and bracing weather.

Cordelia

They chase along o'er the dusty way—
'Tis a sorry time for best array!
But noise of wheels and their laughter gay
Float on the twilight air.
And thus they go from the annual show—
The agricultural fair.

The Legend of the Dipper

Once in a country far away—
So runs the legendary lore—
A suff'ring people cried in pain,
By reason of their thirsting sore.

The rivers and the springs were dry,
Dead were the flowers and the grass;
The birds were hoarse, and could not sing,
And all the heavens above were brass.

The land was sad and sorrowful,
Gaunt Famine stalked the country wide,
Full many in the stricken homes
From cruel, parching thirst had died.

One night, with dipper in her hand,
Out underneath the watching skies,
Went forth a maid to find, perchance,
Where springs of water had their rise.

She came into a silent wood,
And kneeling there beneath a tree
Prayed earnestly to God for help—
That He would her condition see.

Cordelia

The burden of her plea was rain ;
If not on all the shower might fall,
Would not the good Lord send enough
To simply fill her dipper small ?

So long the prayer, o'er drowsy eyes
The god of sleep his mantle threw ;
Lo, when she woke the cup was filled
With water fresh as morning dew !

Ne'er paused the maiden in her joy
To moisten her own parched lips first ;
Remembered she her mother dear,
Dying in agonies of thirst.

So toward her home she ran with haste,
Nor on her mission lagged or stopped ;
But, woeful case, she, stumbling, fell,
And from her hand the dipper dropped !

While prone upon the ground she lay,
Well-nigh too faint to rise again,
She felt the grass beside her move,
And from it came a cry of pain.

A fainting dog was lying there,
And dying from the scorching sun,
The cup she raised ; she thought to give
A drop e'en to this thirsty one.

The Legend of the Dipper

O, blessed sight! O, glad surprise!
The dipper so divinely filled
Had still been kept by unseen Hand,
So that the water had not spilled.

Now as she poured within her hand
Some water for the brute's sad need,
At once there came a blessing grand
Which quite repaid her for the deed;

For, lo! the dipper by her held,
The water clear and cool within,
Was changed, by wondrous miracle,
To silver pure from one of tin!

Homeward the journey then she made;
To other hands the treasure gave,
Which in her heart she hoped would be
The means her mother's life to save.

The matron saw the liquid cool—
She looked with longing, glazing eye;
But, with a noble sacrifice,
She turned away, prepared to die.

"I cannot take from one so young
What shall to her of value be;
You long may live; I soon must die;
What matter a few days to me?"

Cordelia

Thus to the daughter spoke the dame,
And passed the dipper from her hand;
Lo, as it passed, a change was wrought;
The chalice was a golden band!

As now the servant thought to pass
To each the water to them sent
There stood a stranger at the door,
With saddened looks and figure bent.

The lines of sorrow on his brow,
The depth of sadness in his face,
His urgent need and vestments poor,
Appealed to all within the place.

With grateful heart he raised his eyes
When to his hand the dipper came;
"Blessed is he," he said, "who gives
A cup of water in His name."

Then all about him splendors shone,
A radiance of dazzling light;
The golden goblet which he held
Was set, with seven diamonds bright.

But joy! it suddenly became
A gushing fountain, pure and sweet;
Flowing throughout the thirsty land,
A boon for all the suff'ring meet.

The Legend of the Dipper

Then through the night, from gladdened earth,
Up where the stars so brilliant shine,
The seven jewels took their way,
Sparkling with beauty most divine!

There, from a golden chalice pure,
The starry dipper in the skies
Is set to tell to all who see
The blessing of self-sacrifice.

The Land of the Young

“And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man.”—St. Mark xvi. 5.

Within the Holy Book I turned and read
The story how the women sought the Dead,
But found where He had lain
An angel visitant arrayed in white.
Around Him shimmered aureoles of light
Like that which later flooded all the skies
When exiled John, with gaze-enraptured eyes,
Looked o'er the heav'nly plain.

Eternal youth sat on his brow, for he
Was from a land where age can never be;
His glad evangel fell on mortal ear:
“The Christ is risen; lo, He is not here!”

But as the sacred lore
I conned, if I might learn what lesson still
From this first Easter should my bosom thrill,
Fresh as the morn appears when night is done,
To my rapt soul there came a precious one
I had not seen before!

Now for my heart these words new meaning hold;
Though one by one my life's swift years be told,
And backward hurled as leaves on tempests flung,
I'll find them in the country of the young.

The Absent

Here on this grassy slope we sat us down
As only truest comrades ever may,
Watching the winding river thrid its way
Through mottled meadows, past the sleepy town.

Arm clasped in arm, 'mid fields we wandered
slow,
Our converse ran with easy flow, and free,
And life was at its full, sweet flood with me—
'Twas yesterday, and yet so long ago!

SONNETS

The Reformer

His feet are on the heights where heroes stand,
And, Argus-eyed, his vision scans the years;
He sees the burdened ones with sweat and
tears,
For them his voice is heard throughout the land;
Lo, while he boldly speaks, on every hand
Opposing power its brazen front uprears,
E'en where he hoped for sympathy, appears
A blinded host to check his project grand!
Yet from the summit thunders he his word,
A warning cry to turn the falling rod—
That men may yet dispel the hov'ring gloom;
But when for human rights they stand unstirred,
'Tis then is heard the angered tones of God,
And the Almighty strikes the hour of doom!

The Empty Nest

I came one day across an empty nest ;
The wild November winds, with solemn sigh,
Intoned their mournful measures to the sky ;
Gone was the brood which once had found its
rest
And safe retreat beneath the mother's breast ;
Gone was the smile of June, and, far on high,
The leaden, wind-borne rack went flying by,
While Nature in her slumber-robe was dressed.
So loves and hopes must wither and decay,
The light and joy and song of home depart.
And missing be the forms we erst have pressed ;
No life but knows its chill, November day,
Nor in this world was ever there a heart
That did not hold in grief its empty nest !

March

The wild and noisy March his war-cry rings
And sets his storm-cloud banner in the sky;
The sun in veiled splendor moves on high;
The wind from out the frozen Northland sings
In diapason full; the warrior flings

All o'er the slumb'ring land, with shriek and
sigh,

The snowy emblems of his empery,
And takes his ermined throne with pomp like
kings.

Yet well I know his reign cannot be long,

For 'mid his loudest notes I still can hear

The south wind stir, while growing daffodils
Their spathes uplift, and through it all the song
That tells my glad'ning heart the Spring is
near,

And soon the summer time shall crown the
hills!

June

Oh, June, thou splendid month of roses red,
That burden all the air with odors sweet,
I lift my joyful eyes again to greet
Thy sapphire skies which vault me overhead;
I hear through all the year thy coming tread,
As march the moving days with hurried feet,
And often wish the flying time more fleet,
That thou may'st to thy rosy throne be led.
Yet, though I prize thy scented, songful hours,
Thy precious dew amid the twilight still,
I love thee more for time long gone, I ween,
When, 'mong her cool and fragrance-laden
bowers,
Waiting with joy my longing heart to fill,
I won the rarest woman for my queen!

The Happy

I count him happy in this world of care,
Where pain and sorrow are the common lot,
And oft obscuring clouds arise to blot
With shadows what would be a prospect fair,
Who, though the rue be his, and he must fare
The way alone, by helpers all forgot,
Meekly looks up, and, trusting, murmurs not,
But keeps his course, and finds a blessing there.
He dwells from jarring elements apart,
Where angels of contentment guard him
round;
A peace seraphic fills with joy the heart,
The pathway which he treads is holy ground;
He lives a conqueror o'er sordid things,
And upward mounts as if on eagles' wings!

L. of C.

Lake George

How beautiful thy placid bosom lies
In the embrace of verdant, cloud-crowned hills;
Thy softened, healthful mountain breeze distills

Sweet balm for him who to thy quiet flies;
Scene upon scene, each with the other vies,
As here this fairy land my vision fills,
To lift, in peace, the heart of him who wills
Toward better things above the arching skies.
Dull must he be of heart, and eye, and ear,
Who fails to learn the lessons thou dost teach,
And does not note the grandeur of the place;
Feels not, in silent awe, a Presence near,
Nor hears, in everything around, His speech
Who sets His kiss upon thy sunlit face.

Old Age

"Old age is dark and unlovely."—OSSIAN.

'Tis true if all the precious time is spent
Amid the stress and fret of anxious care
For things that perish ere we are aware;
If all our energies are ever bent
On worldly power or pelf; not one intent
That by the lips in word, or song, or prayer,
We help some soul his heavy burden bear,
Nor deem ourselves on holy missions sent.
Yet have I seen age beautiful and calm,
The day's work done, the happy soul at rest,
Its ear turned even then to catch the psalm
Down-ringing from the mansions of the blest;
So in my heart I hold this blessed truth;
Old age may but begin eternal youth.

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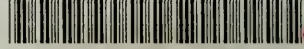
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